

HAROLD A. LETT

Harold A. Lett was born in Adrian, Michigan, January 8, 1896. His father died when he was quite young, and his mother, whom he described as a woman of strong character with an unerring sense of fairness, who believed in hard work and self discipline, was the molding force ^{that} ~~who~~ shaped his basic values.

At age twelve came a bout with T. B. and a period spent living with relatives in a small farming community in Minnesota. This experience, too, would leave its imprint on the man. As the only black child in the community, he was accepted as an equal since he wasn't an Indian, and Indians were the outcaste in Minnesota! While Mr. Lett opposed white oppression of blacks, fighting throughout his adult life for the cause of equality, partly because of his experiences in Minnesota, generalizations about "hate whitey" were for him unthinkable.

High school was attended in three states: Toledo, Ohio, Erie Pa., and finished in Cass Lake Minnesota in 1915.

After working in Michigan in a number of what was then considered Negro jobs--busboy, porter, waiter, etc., came a job with Nove Engine Co. as secretary, and in 1919 a move to

recruiter for the company.

Then came nine years with the state government of Michigan. This was also a period of involvement with the Michigan branch of the N.A.A.C.P..

In 1930 Mr. Lett joined the staff of the Urban League as industrial secretary for the Pittsburgh branch. Because of the depression, there were few jobs to be found for black workers, so league work was centered around "hold your jobs" techniques, and getting young workers organized through such varied activities as an Urban League drama group.

In 1934 Mr. Lett came to Newark as executive director to the New Jersey Urban League. He functioned throughout the state seeking jobs for black workers, working to solve school problems, handling health problems, and initiating self help organizations in the black community.

In 1945 Mr. Lett became assistant director of compliance for the New Jersey Division against Discrimination. Here his job included setting up regulations, ~~procedures~~, conducting investigations and many other duties aimed at bringing about compliance with the state FAPC legislation.

In 1959 Mr. Lett became assistant director of the labor manage-

ment relations commission for the National Conference of Christians and Jews of New York City, a position he held until 1960. Since 1960 Mr. Lett has retired from full time staff duties, but remains busier than ever as a free lance lecturer and consultant specializing in race relations.

Throughout his career Mr. Lett has been active in civic affairs, serving on numerous boards and commissions dealing with housing, welfare, labor management relations, and other vital civic concerns. In colleges from coast to coast, he has conducted seminars in human relations.

Many organizations have honored him with certificates for distinguished service. Lincoln University in Pa., and Rutgers university at New Brunswick have both conferred honorary doctorates upon him.

Mr. Lett has been married twice and has five children, four surviving, and nine grandchildren; of these he is extremely proud.

As he reflects back on his long and productive career, Mr. Lett feels that the approach he has taken in trying to bring about equality for blacks was, and still is a sound one.

Geraldine Spellman